

MIKE JOHNSON

4TH DISTRICT, LOUISIANA

WASHINGTON DC OFFICE

418 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-2777
FAX: (202) 225-8039

BOSSIER CITY OFFICE

2250 HOSPITAL DRIVE, SUITE 248
BOSSIER CITY, LA 71111
PHONE: (888) 216-3005
FAX: (318) 584-7294



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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November 23, 2020

The Honorable Barbara M. Barrett
Secretary
United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Barrett:

As the 30th anniversary of the commencement of Operation Desert Storm approaches, I write to call your attention to the heroism of seven B-52 crews who flew several of the opening sorties of that conflict and respectfully request that their Air Medal awards be upgraded to the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On January 16, 1991, seven B-52 bombers from the 596th Bomb Squadron, 2nd Bomb Wing took off from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana to destroy Iraqi command and control centers, communications facilities, and power generation facilities before returning back to Barksdale. The historic roundtrip mission, officially named Operation Senior Surprise, took 35.4 hours to complete and covered over 14,000 miles. It was a tremendous success that paved the way for continued air superiority for coalition forces throughout Operation Desert Storm.

Because Operation Senior Surprise was a classified, one-of-a-kind mission, many of its defining achievements were not widely known until long after the sorties were flown. At the time, Operation Senior Surprise was the longest air combat mission in history, and that record would stand for twelve years. It was also the first time a bomber aircraft conducted a long-range air combat mission by launching from its home base and returning to the same base after mission completion.

These brave airmen set the bar for what the Air Force now proudly calls its *Global Strike* capability. Through Operation Senior Surprise, the United States made it clear to the world and any potential adversaries that our Air Force can deliver precision munitions anywhere on the planet in a matter of hours. Given the extraordinary characteristics of the mission and the expertise with which it was flown, I believe a medal upgrade is warranted. As such, I respectfully ask that the recognition of the achievements of these airmen be upgraded from the Air Medal to the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Mike Johnson
Member of Congress